



Chief Justice Sears Addresses General Assembly

Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears delivered her State of the

Judiciary address to a joint session of the General Assembly on January 25, 2006, reporting that Georgia's judiciary is "sound, strong, and working well to meet the challenges that face us."

Chief Justice Sears highlighted programs that have made a difference in the way justice is administered including: e-filing initiative, the Child Support Guidelines Commission, and accountability courts. She is especially concerned with issues involving children and family such as improving legal rep-



Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears delivers her first State of the Judiciary Address in the House Chambers.

resentation in juvenile courts, expediting appeals for child deprivation cases, and placement stability for children in foster care.

Other Highlights:

Judicial Independence

"It is not the role of a judge

to try cases in the court of public opinion. Rather, it is the job of a judge to be a fair and impartial arbiter of conflict."

Budget

"I only ask that you consider the essential role you play in preserving and improving our court system."

Superior Court Judgeships

On the 10 recommended superior court judgeships, "Georgia is fortunate to have dedicated and talented superior court judges, but we need more than talent and dedication alone if we are to address the demands of a growing state population."

Chief Justice Sears ended her address by asking the General Assembly to recognize a mutual concern for excellence in government by all three branches of government. "We are all partners in this great enterprise of representative government and are traveling the same path. Our roles and responsibilities are different, but our goal is the same — to serve the people of Georgia to the best of our abilities." ☞

Workload Assessment to Begin

In late March selected superior court judges will begin keeping detailed records of the amount of time spent on the bench for specific case-types, as well as time logs for case-related work away from the bench.

Three criminal case-types: "unified appeals," "serious felony" and "other felony," will be used in the study according to Judge Joe Bishop, Chair of the Workload Assessment Committee.

continued pg 4

INSIDE

- People, Places & Events pg 2
- Benham Awards pg 3
- Drug Endangered Children Initiative pg 4
- Under the Gold Dome pg 5
- Website Redesign pg 6
- Directory Corrections pg 7
- Court of Appeals Centennial Celebration pg 8

People, Places and Events ...

In Memoriam

✱ **Senior Justice Richard Bell** of Decatur died on November 28, 2005. Justice Bell served on the Supreme Court of Georgia from 1982 - 1992. Previous to his time on the state's highest bench, he served as a Superior Court judge in the Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit (1976-1982) and as District Attorney for twenty years.

✱ **Senior Judge George W. Harris** of Fort Valley died on December 25, 2005. Judge Harris served as a Justice of the Peace beginning in 1976. In 1983 he became a Magistrate in Peach County and subsequently served as Chief Magistrate until his retirement. Judge Harris remained active in the Council of Magistrate Court Judges after taking senior status and was serving as a mentor judge and chair of the Council's Hospitality Committee at the time of his death.

✱ **Judge Del Buttrill** of McDonough succumbed to lung cancer on January 16, 2006, after a year-long struggle. Judge Buttrill, who served as Henry County probate judge for nearly 24 years, was set to retire on January 29.

Appointments

✱ Swearing-in ceremonies were held in Atlanta on December 28, 2005, for **Judge Oliver Harris Doss, Jr.**, Appalachian Judicial

Circuit, and **Judge James E. Hardy**, Southern Judicial Circuit. Gov. Perdue was present in the House Chambers of the State Capitol to administer the oaths of office.

These two judgeships, created in 2005, became effective January 1, 2006.

✱ **Judge D. Scott Smith**, Cherokee Judicial Circuit, **Judge Wade M. Crumbley**, Flint Judicial Circuit, and **Judge Thomas N. Davis, Jr.**, Gwinnett Judicial Circuit, were sworn-in by Gov. Perdue on December 29, 2005.

These three judgeships, created in 2005, became effective January 1, 2006.

✱ On January 31, 2006, Gov. Sonny Perdue announced his appointment of **Judge Christopher Brasher** to the Atlanta Judicial Circuit. Judge Brasher fills the vacancy created by the resignation of Judge M. Gino Brogdon. He will be sworn-in on February 28, 2006.

Honors

✱ **Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears** was honored at the **14th Annual Trumpet Awards**, on Monday, January 23, 2006, at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta. The Trumpet Awards salutes

African-American achievements in many diverse fields including law, politics, medicine and entertainment. Chief Justice Sears was recognized for her contributions in the field of law. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. is the presenting sponsor of the annual Trumpet Awards.

✱ On Friday, January 6, 2006, **Presiding Justice Carol W. Hunstein** was recognized by the State Bar of Georgia Committee on Women and Minorities in the Profession

with the Commitment to Equality Award.

Justice Hunstein, currently chair of the Georgia Commission on Access & Fairness in

the Courts, has worked tirelessly throughout her judicial career to enhance opportunities for women, minorities, and those with disabilities in the courts. Justice Robert Benham introduced the Presiding Justice and presented the award.

✱ On December 15, 2005, **Chief Judge Brooks E. Blich, III**, Alapaha Judicial Circuit, was awarded the 2005 Liston Elkins Award for Distinguished Service. The award is given annually to an individual whose dedicated efforts have contributed to an improved quality of life for the citizens of Southeast Georgia.



Commitment to Equality

People, Places and Events ...

Benham Awards

✱ The **Seventh Annual Justice Robert Benham Award** recipients were honored on January 5, 2006, at the State Bar mid-year meeting in Atlanta. The Benham Award for Community Service was established in 1998 to highlight the spirit of volunteerism in the legal community.

This year's judicial recipients are:

- **Judge Herbert E. Phipps**, Court of Appeals of Georgia, acknowledged for his years of service as a civil rights litigator and judge and his continued work with community organizations in Albany.
- **Judge Duncan Wheale**, Augusta Judicial Circuit, honored for his

civic contributions in the Augusta area including: urging downtown development, leading an effort to serve the city's underprivileged, and working to heal racial divisions.

tenure as juvenile court judge "to promote effective intervention for juvenile offenders that benefit the individuals as well as society as a whole."



Recipients of the 2006 Justice Benham Award were honored on January 5, 2006, at the State Bar of Georgia's Midyear Meeting in Atlanta.

- **Judge William "Hal" Craig**, Flint Judicial Circuit, recognized for his lifelong commitment to the citizens of Henry County throughout his legal and judicial career.
- **Judge Gregory A. Adams**, Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit, recognized for his efforts during his

- **Judge Cliff Jolliff**, Juvenile Courts, Northeastern Judicial Circuit, involvement in professional and court-related organizations and his participation in a range of efforts that directly benefit the community.

Other recipients of the Benham Award for

Community Service include: Mr. Carlton A. Devooght, Brunswick; Mr. Roy W. Copeland, Valdosta; Mr. Charles P. Taylor, Warner Robins; Mr. Robert A. Cowan, Dalton; Ms. Samantha Jacobs, Metter; and Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Mr. Upshaw C. Bentley, Jr., Athens. ☺

GCCA 2005 Program of the Year Award



The Georgia Council of Court Administrators selected the Fulton County Juvenile Court "Education Advocacy Initiative Program" for the 2005 Program of the Year Award. Mr. Bob Bray (right), made the presentation on behalf of the Council to (left to right) Mr. Todd Brown, Education Facilitator; Ms. Janet Ransom, Supervising Probation Officer; Ms. Penny Wright, Education Liaison; and Ms. Kimberly Mills, Education Advocate. The ceremony was held at the Romae T. Powell Juvenile Justice Center on November 22, 2005. ☺

Drug Endangered Children Initiative

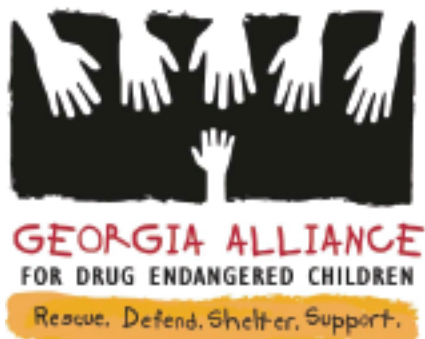
Since 2004, Judge Peggy Walker, Juvenile Court of Douglas County, has seen a dramatic increase in cases of abused and neglected children whose parents are involved in production or use of methamphetamine.

Accepting the challenge of advocating on behalf of Georgia's most vulnerable citizens, Judge Walker began to investigate national Drug Endangered Children programs, and took the lead in forming the Georgia Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (GADEC).

The GADEC has developed into a multi-agency effort whose mission is to prevent abuse to children caused by the manufacture, distribution, sale and/or use of drugs. The program seeks to rescue, defend, shelter, and support children who suffer physical and psychological harm caused by exposure to methamphetamine, alcohol, and other drug abuse.

GADEC has supported development of a state protocol for handling

drug-endangered children which is being used by law enforcement, child welfare and medical services. Now a national model, the protocol was a collaborative effort of the



Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Georgia Department of Human Resources, with assistance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The GADEC Executive Committee oversees seven workgroups: Local Alliance Building, Training, Protocols, Prevention, Treatment, Public Awareness, and Data Collection and Evaluation. The effort involves 90 volunteers and three full-time staff members.

Today the GADEC looks forward to hosting a third state-wide conference, as well as sponsoring regional training and education sessions. The group is also developing a comprehensive database of state and national research resources, conducting public awareness campaigns, and providing prevention services for children and their families designed to stop child abuse that results from illicit drug use and alcohol abuse.

For more information contact Ms. Melva Steps, GADEC Project Director, stepsm@gaaoc.us or call 404-463-1229 ☎

Judicial Workload Assessment cont.

For purposes of the study "serious felony" is defined as "a felony case in which the District Attorney seeks a sentence of ten or more years of confinement at the time of sentencing." In addition, misdemeanors of a high and aggravated nature will be considered "serious misdemeanors" and the remainder as "other misdemeanors." These case-types closely follow the widely-acclaimed "Minnesota Model," developed by the National Center for State Courts.

Records generated by the study will be used to determine new case weights for the annual superior court judgeship study conducted by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

For more information, contact Ms. Yolanda Lewis at 404-656-6412. ☎

Skip Chesshire Next NACM President

Mr. Skip Chesshire, Cobb County Superior Court administrator, recently began his term as president-elect of the National Association of Court Managers (NACM). Mr. Chesshire, a founder of the Georgia Council of Court Administrators, has been in court administration for over twenty years. In July 2006 he will assume the presidency of NACM at its Annual Meeting to be held in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Mr. Chesshire began a three-year term on the NACM Board of Directors in July 2005 and also serves on the Board of Directors of the National Center for State Courts in Williamsburg, Virginia. ☎



Mr. Skip Chesshire

Under the Gold Dome

The following legislation is being considered during the 2006 Legislative Session as recommended by the Judicial Council.

Superior Court Judgeships

- **HB 1148** and **SB 416** Creation of a third judgeship in the **Enotah Judicial Circuit**.
- **HB 1111** Creation of a tenth judgeship in the **Cobb Judicial Circuit**
- **HB 1073** Creation of a third judgeship in the **Houston Judicial Circuit**.
- **HB 1263** Creation of a third judgeship in the **Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit**

Alcovy Circuit Split **HB 1255** proposes creation of the Walton Judicial Circuit.

“Your Guide to the Georgia Court” Gets New Look

The Administrative Office of the Courts is pleased to offer a new version of our popular

“Your Guide to the Georgia Courts” brochure.

The new design includes a restructured appellate route schematic, updated language, and information about managing court operations, jury service, and funding of the state’s courts.

To order your copies, call 404-656-5171 today. ☎



Civil Filings **House Bill 1195** specifies that “superior court clerks may refuse to accept a civil case filing that is not accompanied by a completed filing coversheet as required by law.”

For complete coverage of the 2006 Session of the General Assembly, visit the AOC’s Legislative Tracking website at www.ciclt.com/aoc/default.asp ☎



Upcoming Events

APRIL 2006

Court Interpreter Workshop

The Commission on Interpreters will host a skills-building workshop for court interpreters April 8-9, 2006, at the Cobb Galleria Centre in Atlanta. This workshop is co-sponsored by the National Center for State Courts and the Commission on Interpreters through a grant from the Georgia Bar Foundation. The program will feature nationally-recognized instructors and is designed both to enhance skills for court interpreters and encourage interpreters to take the Oral Certification Exam.

Registered court interpreters who are currently licensed and reside in Georgia may be eligible for a scholarship subsidy. Contact Ms. Sharon Reiss at 404-656-6422 for additional information.

MAY 2006

2nd Annual Drug and DUI Court Conference

The Judicial Council Standing Committee on Drug Courts will host the 2nd Annual Statewide Drug and DUI Court Conference at the Wyndham Peachtree Conference Center in Peachtree City on May 10-12, 2006.

The program is designed for county commissioners, legislators, judges, prosecutors, defenders, probation, law enforcement, and other court personnel already operating drug courts or those who are considering implementing Drug or DUI Courts.

For additional information, contact Ms. Kelly Moody, AOC Legislative and Governmental Affairs Division, at 404-463-3820. ☎

Judicial Branch Website Unveils Redesign

In its continuing efforts to provide timely, relevant information to the judges, court personnel, and citizens of Georgia, the Administrative Office of the Courts has unveiled a comprehensive redesign of its website.

Mr. Brian Collins, AOC Webmaster, said of the site's new look, "We want www.georgiacourts.org to be among the best judicial websites in the country." Several features have been added that allow users quick access to information.

Find What You Need

An integral part of the new design centers of the "Find What

You Need" Section. Users can access information based on who they are: citizens, judges, court per-

sonnel, members of the legal profession.

News Items

A scrolling news feed from the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*

extensive information about all of the state's courthouses.

Quick Links

Easy-to-navigate tabs are located on the website homepage for Legislative Tracking, Caseload Data, Publications, Court Rules, Court Technology Initiatives, as well as many more items of interest.

Feedback

"We hope to receive feedback from the court community regarding use of the website and its accessibility on www.georgiacourts.org," said Mr. Collins.

To send feedback about www.georgiacourts.org, visitors to the site can use the link at the "Find What You Need" feature. ☞



www.georgiacourts.org

and a feature window for recent news of the judicial community have also been added to the website.

Courthouse Spotlight

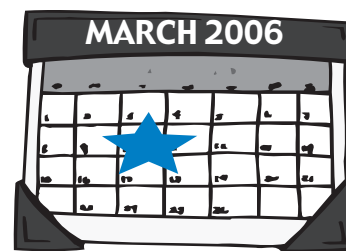
County courthouses are highlighted in "Courthouse Spotlight." Each time a user accesses the website a different county is featured along with a link to the Carl Vinson Institute of Government's site with

FY 05 Annual Report Available

The Georgia Courts FY 05 Annual Report is now available.

The annual report includes trial and appellate court caseload information for Calendar Year 2004.

To obtain copies, contact the AOC at 404-656-5171. ☞



LEAP TRAINING

The Board of Court Reporting is sponsoring the *Learning Essentials About Professionalism* seminar on March 10, 2006, at the Cobb Galleria Centre in Atlanta.

LEAP is designed to promote professionalism, educate, guide, and mentor new court reporters.

For more information contact Mr. Clay Richardson, Project Manager, at 404-651-8707. ☞

Courts Directory Corrections

SUPERIOR COURTS

Appalachian Circuit

Judge Oliver Harris Doss, Jr.
400 W. Main Street
Blue Ridge, GA 30513
706-258-5203

Atlanta Circuit

Judge Christopher Brasher
T8905 Justice Center Tower
185 Central Avenue, SW
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-730-4335/F 730-7160

Cherokee Circuit

Judge D. Scott Smith
135 W. Cherokee Avenue, Suite 335
Cartersville, GA 30120
678-721-3242/F 721-3251

Flint Circuit

Judge Wade M. Crumbley
One Courthouse Square
McDonough, GA 30253
678-432-4607/F 770-954-2137

Gwinnett Circuit

Judge Tom Davis, Jr.
Gwinnett Justice &
Administration Center
75 Langley Drive
Lawrenceville, GA 30045
770-822-8585/F 822-8584

Southern Circuit

Judge James E. Hardy
PO Box 2037
Thomasville, GA 31799
229-228-6370/F 228-6369

SENIOR JUDGES

Superior Court

Judge Marvin W. Sorrells
770-266-1610

Magistrate

Judge G.L. Arflin, Jr.
PO Box 3
Unadilla, GA 31091-0003
478-627-3303

PROBATE COURTS

Decatur County

Judge Edwin J. Perry, III
112 W. Water Street
PO Box 234
Bainbridge, GA 39818-0234

MAGISTRATE COURTS

Cobb County

Add: Judge John Strauss
5180 Roswell Road, NW
Atlanta, GA 30342
404-256-3600, ext. 203

Add: Judge Timothy Wolfe
3059 Vinings Ferry Drive
Atlanta, GA 30339
770-435-8616
twolfelaw@bellsouth.net

Add: Judge Leah Zammit
Providence Park, Suite 50
3535 Roswell Road
Marietta, GA 30062
770-971-9494

Dooly County

Add: Judge Lonny Anderson
507 Parker Street
Vienna, GA 31092
229-268-4669

Gwinnett County

Add: Judge Joseph L. Randazzo, Jr.
Gwinnett County Justice &
Administration Center
75 Langley Drive
Lawrenceville, GA 30045-6935
770-822-8081/F 822-8075

Lee County

Add: Judge Michael Todd Roberts
PO Box 522
Leesburg, GA 31763
229-759-6016/F 759-3303

Oglethorpe County

Add: Andretta Derricotte
PO Box 356
Lexington, GA 30648
706-743-8321/F 743-3177

Add: Judge Jean Turner- Horton
PO Box 356
Lexington, GA 30648
706-743-8321/F 743-3177

Delete: Judge Ashley Barnett

Putnam County

Judge Ellen I. Pierce
Judge Virginia C. Clinch
100 S. Jefferson Ave., Suite 306

MUNICIPAL COURTS

Flovilla, Jackson, Locust Grove

Judge W. Franklin Freeman, Jr.
250 Lassiter Road
Forsyth, GA 31029

Sandy Springs

Chief Judge James M. Anderson, III
5855 Sandy Springs Circle, Ste. 130
Sandy Springs, GA 30328
404-255-0319/F 255-0477

Judge Pro Tem Lawrence D. Young
1827 Powers Ferry Rd., Bldg. 12-200
Atlanta, GA 30339
770-818-0082/F 818-0084

Waycross

Add: Judge Pro Tem. Adam Ferrell
117 Albany Avenue
PO Box 1589
Waycross, GA 31502-1589
912-283-3858/F 283-3806

Delete: Judge Andrew C. Spivey

SOLICITOR GENERAL

Clarke County

Add: Morris H. Wiltshire, Jr.

Delete: Ralph W. Powell

SUPERIOR COURT CLERK

Hart County

William E. Holland, III
706-376-7189

Court of Appeals Launches Centennial Celebration

On January 24, 2006, the twelve judges of the Court of Appeals of Georgia gathered in the State Capitol for a ceremony to kick off the court's Centennial Celebration.

Chief Judge John H. Ruffin, Jr., welcomed the crowd of judges, legislators, court employees, and the public. Judge Herbert Phipps gave the invocation and Presiding Judge J.D. Smith presented



Chief Judge John H. Ruffin, Jr., receives the Governor's Proclamation.

ed a brief history of the Court of Appeals of Georgia through its first one hundred years.

Governor Sonny Perdue presented a proclamation to Chief Judge Ruffin to recognize the court's upcoming October anniversary and designate 2006 the "Court of Appeals Centennial Year." The Governor's statement recognizes the Court's role in ensuring that "Georgians receive fair treatment in the trial courts and in final resolutions of disputes."



Court of Appeals Centennial Ceremony.

Lt. Governor Mark Taylor and Speaker of the House Glenn Richardson also presented resolu-

tions from the Senate and House of Representatives commemorating the watermark year for the Court of Appeals.

Centennial activities are planned throughout the year

including hearing oral arguments in cities around the state, producing a documentary, preparing a history of the court, and hosting a reception at the Georgia Aquarium in October. ☞

LEAH WARD SEARS
Chief Justice
DAVID L. RATLEY
Director
COURTS JOURNAL STAFF
Billie Bolton
Ashley G. Stollar

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